



**For Release**  
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## **Thomas Built Buses to showcase new plant / new bus**

**HIGH POINT, N.C.** — Thomas Built Buses is nearing completion on its \$39.7 million Type C school bus manufacturing facility in High Point, N.C. Scheduled to open for pre-series production in November 2003, the 275,000 square foot plant will be the company's center for building its all-new conventional school bus, which will be marketed as the Thomas Saf-T-Liner® C2.

"When it opens, this plant will be the most modern commercial vehicle manufacturing facility in the DaimlerChrysler family," said John O'Leary, president and CEO of Thomas Built Buses.

Thomas' new conventional, the Saf-T-Liner C2, planned for introduction at November's National Association for Pupil Transportation show in Salt Lake City, improves on advantages already well known in Thomas Built products – superior visibility, performance and safety.

“The C2 is unlike any school bus on the road today. From every angle, this is new to the industry,” O’Leary said. “It owes a lot of that individuality and innovation to input from customer focus groups and exhaustive market surveys.”

The C2’s large, curved windshield and low profile hood provide the driver with an outstanding view of the roadway and passenger loading area. The cockpit was designed for driver comfort, with ergonomics that will set a new industry standard with soft touch non-glare materials and easy to read switches and gauges.

Thomas has improved the school bus assembly process by attaching the exterior steel sheets to a welded steel framework with structural adhesives and self-piercing rivets to enhance body strength, durability and passenger protection.

“We’re moving the safety and performance bars considerably higher for the entire industry,” O’Leary said. “In fact, the improved maneuverability, visibility and advanced technology will change the way passengers, drivers, operators and technicians think about school buses.”

In addition to easy accessibility for maintenance, the body and chassis share an integrated multiplexed wiring network that will improve reliability and simplify diagnosis.

The bus will be available with a choice of the Mercedes-Benz MBE 900 series engine or the Caterpillar C7 engine.

“Service technicians and drivers alike will appreciate the C2’s exceptional performance, easy maintenance and enhanced safety features,” O’Leary said.

“The chassis’s outstanding features combined with the modern body styling and state-of-the-art assembly techniques have created a truly remarkable product.”

Founded in 1916 in High Point, Thomas's corporate headquarters and manufacturing plants span more than 1 million square feet in High Point, NC. The company is a leading employer in Guilford and Randolph counties, with 1,460 employees. The new Thomas plant will generate about 178 new jobs in 2004.

"Thomas's strength is its people and our experience in this business shows in every bus we deliver," O'Leary concluded. "That's a long-standing tradition at Thomas and one we will continue to deliver to our customers. Our goal is to lead the industry in safety, technology, quality and dependability. We will continue to set the standard when it comes to transporting the children of North America."

Thomas Built Buses is a subsidiary of Freightliner LLC and is the leading manufacturer of school buses in North America. Freightliner LLC, headquartered in Portland, Oregon is the largest heavy-duty truck manufacturer in North America and a leading manufacturer of Class 3-7 vehicles. Freightliner produces and markets commercial vehicles under the Freightliner, Sterling, Western Star, American LaFrance, and Thomas Built Buses nameplates. Freightliner is a DaimlerChrysler Company, the world's leading commercial vehicle manufacturer.

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